

Message Text

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SUBJECT: US PARTICIPATION IN PLOVDIV FAIR FY 78

REF: STATE 301616

1. EMBASSY IS DISAPPOINTED AND CONCERNED AT INDICATION (REF) THAT USDOC PLANS TO REDUCE PARTICIPATION IN PLOVDIV FAIR TO ONLY BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICE (BDO) IN FY 1978. FOLLOWING POINTS SHOULD BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED BEFORE MAKING FINAL DECISION.

2. US-GOB TRADE HAS GROWN AT HIGH RATE FOR PAST THREE YEARS AND SHOWS GOOD GROWTH POTENTIAL FOR 1977. NON-AGRICULTURAL TRADE HAS INCREASED AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL, AND IF SALES BY EUROPEAN SUBSIDIARIES OF US FIRMS ARE INCLUDED, MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS WOULD COMPRISE A LARGER SHARE OF THE TOTAL. NUMBER OF FIRMS DOING BUSINESS IN BULGARIA IS INCREASING, AND ALTHOUGH PARTICIPATION IN PLOML E IS NOT A REQUIREMENT, FIRMS DOING BUSINESS HERE RECOGNIZE FAIR AS VERY EFFECTIVE PROMOTIONAL DEVICE.

3. US EXHIBIT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO SMALL OR NEW-TO-MARKET FIRMS IN TERMS OF SERVICESKROVIDED.
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PAGE 02 SOFIA 02693 211408Z

LARGE FIRMS ALSO BENEFIT SINCE US EXHIBIT IS NUCLEUS WHICH DRAWS AND IMPRESSES GOB OFFICIALS MORE THAN SCATTERED INDEPENDENT EXHIBITS AND BDO FOR INFORMATION ONLY.

4. COMMERCIAL PRESENCE WITH ONLY PRODUCT LITERATURE IS

INADEQUATE FOR PLOVDIV FAIR IN ANOTHER RESPECT. BULGARIANS COME TO SEE EQUIPMENT OR PRODUCTS AND TO HAVE DETAILED DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THEM WITH COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES AND SPECIALISTS. SALES ATTRIBUTABLE TO PLOVDIV PARTICIPATION ARE BASED ON PERSONAL SALES CONTACTS WITH FTO OFFICIALS AND END USERS. WHILE A BDO MAY DISPOSE OF LARGE QUANTITIES OF LITERATURE AND ANSWER GENERAL QUESTIONS, IT WILL NOT COMPETE EFFECTIVELY WITH EXHIBITS FEATURING BOTH PRODUCTS AND LIVE SPECIALISTS.

5. IT IS ALSO DOUBTFUL THAT SUCH A PRESENCE WOULD ALLOW FOR US-INITIATED CONTACTS EITHER BEFORE OR AFTER FAIR. EMBASSY CANNOT PROMOTE A BDO AT HIGH OR INTERMEDIATE LEVELS AS IS THE CASE OF EXHIBIT WITH PRODUCTS AND REPRESENTATIVES. ALSO WE SUSPECT THAT IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR BOOTH STAFF TO GET NAMES OR OTHER INFORMATION FROM THOSE WHO DO SHOW INTEREST, SINCE THIS USUALLY OCCURS ONLY DURING DISCUSSIONS WITH COMPANY OFFICIALS. THERE WOULD THUS BE NO WAY TO FOLLOW UP ON ANY CONTACTS THAT ARE GENERATED FROM BDO BOOTH.

6. IN SUM, FULL PARTICIPATION IN PLOVDIV FAIR SEEMS TO EMBASSY AN ALMOST INDISPENSIBLE PART OF OUR TOTAL COMMERCIAL EFFORT HERE, AND CONSISTENTLY HAS PAID OFF IN SALES TERMS. MARKET HERE IS HIGHLY COMPETITIVE AND AMERICAN MANUFACTURERS ALREADY ARE AT SOMETHING OF A DISADVANTAGE VIS-A-VIS NEARER INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES SUCH AS FRG AND AUSTRIA (WHO HAVE PERMANENT BUILDINGS AT PLOVDIV). WE SHOULD NOT ABANDON THIS KEY MARKETING MECHANISM. HERZ

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